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ABSTRACT

This book includes eight chapters that explore the history and current status of educational "deficit thinking" and its effects on educational policies and practices. Educational deficit thinking is a form of blaming the victim that views the alleged deficiencies of poor and minority group students and their families as predominantly responsible for these students' school problems and academic failure, while frequently holding structural inequality blameless. Deficit thinking is entrenched in the popular "at-risk" construct and underlies both conservative and liberal approaches to educational reform. Chapters in this book examine early racist roots of deficit thinking; discuss the consecutive development of theories that blamed the lower intellectual performance of minority groups on genetic deficits, cultural deficits, and accumulated environmental deficits; and propose a model of democratic education as an alternative to deficit-theory policies and practices. Examples explore the specific application of deficit thinking to the education of African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. The chapters are: (1) "Conceptualizing the Notion of Deficit Thinking" (Richard R. Valencia); (2) "Early Racist Discourses: The Roots of Deficit Thinking" (Martha Menchaca); (3) "Genetic Pathology Model of Deficit Thinking" (Richard R. Valencia); (4) "Deficit Thinking Models Based on Culture: The Anthropological Protest" (Douglas E. Foley); (5) "Cultural and Accumulated Environmental Deficit Models" (Arthur Pearl); (6) "Contemporary Deficit Thinking" (Richard R. Valencia, Daniel G. Solorzano); (7) "Democratic Education As an Alternative to Deficit Thinking" (Arthur Pearl); and (8) "Epilogue: The Future of Deficit Thinking in Educational Thought and Practice" (Richard R. Valencia, Arthur Pearl). Contains references in each chapter, author profiles, and author and subject indexes. (SV)